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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 LAGOS 000478

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ECON](#) [NI](#) [AID](#)

SUBJECT: LAGOS PILOTS NEW WASTE MGT SCHEME WITH SOME SUCCESS

1. Summary: The Lagos State Ministry of Environment has begun a new waste management program in 24 of 57 local government areas. Under the program, 17 waste management companies provide trash collection services. A separate company handles customer billing, and the ministry provides oversight and enforcement. Though not glitch free, the program appears more successful than previous schemes: trash is collected, most customers are paying their bills, and the areas served are noticeably cleaner. The ministry continues to refine the program but has no concrete plans, yet, to expand the scheme to the whole state. The pilot program, however, shows the ministry has a reasonable understanding of some of the steps needed to ameliorate the trash problem in Lagos, though funding and capacity building remain critical needs. End summary.

2. At the start of Governor Tinubu's second term, the Lagos State Ministry of Environment vowed to review and revamp the waste management program. To that end, the ministry has begun a pilot program in 24 of the state's 57 local government areas (LGAs). The ministry has contracted 17 waste management companies and a billing company to execute the program, with ministry oversight and enforcement.

3. Trash is a ubiquitous problem here. It lines the streets, clogs the sewage ditches and waterways, and smolders on piles throughout the city. Until 1998, the Lagos State Waste Management Authority and the Local Government Councils were directly responsible for waste collection and disposal. The old system could not accommodate the population explosion in Lagos, however. Trash piled up and indiscriminate dumping occurred where there were waste disposal attempts. To rectify the situation, the Ministry of Environment began to involve private service providers (PSPs). The more than 600 registered providers were responsible for collecting both trash and fees. The ministry also tried to integrate individual wheelbarrow operators and "cart-pushers" into the collection arrangement, especially in densely populated areas. According to the ministry, this system showed "unimpressive achievement" due partly to lack of appropriate facilities, non-payment by residents, and inadequate enforcement. Because of the failure of this plan, the state has introduced the new pilot scheme.

CUSTOMERS RECEIVE REGULAR SERVICE FOR MONTHLY
FEES; THE STATE PAYS PSPs UPON DELIVERY

4. Under the pilot program, the billing company assesses residential and commercial properties in the pilot LGAs and assigns monthly fees according to the rates set by the ministry. Monthly rates range from N50 (\$0.38) per room for homes to flat rates of N1000 (\$7.50) for schools and religious buildings and N25,000 (\$188) for restaurants. The fees can be paid at any of 26 designated banks. Frequency of service also varies: one pick-up per week for homes and daily collection for restaurants and markets. The ministry pays the PSPs based on the amount of trash brought to designated dump sites; this pay-by-weight system discourages the otherwise common practice of indiscriminate dumping by collectors.

RESIDENTS APPRECIATE SERVICE AND NOTICEABLE RESULTS

5. The ministry's director of environmental services, Dr. Titi Anibaba, told econoff and econspecialist that most people have been paying their monthly bills, confirming the ministry's long-held assumption that people are willing to foot the bill when reliable service is provided. In some of the pilot LGAs the new scheme has begun to produce noticeable results, with noticeably less trash on the streets or piled beside buildings. Residents of the areas also appreciate not having to employ push-cart operators to haul away their trash. The push-cart approach yielded unreliable, inadequate service, added to traffic congestion, and left residents wondering whether their trash was just

being dumped down the street.

A GOOD START, BUT MUCH REMAINS TO BE DONE

16. Though encouraged by the results of the pilot scheme, Anibaba realizes the ministry is far from solving Lagos' trash problem. Even the pilot program needs refining: the ministry receives up to a hundred calls a day from residents reporting that their trash was not collected or their bill was miscalculated. A contact in Lagos told econoff the service they receive under the new scheme is so poor that they continue to employ their previous collector, in hopes that between the two services, their trash will be collected on a regular basis. The ministry has asked the public to be patient as they work through the "teething pains," and they have made some adjustments to the scheme. For example, a ward structure was instituted when it became clear that a single PSP could not service an entire LGA.

17. Anibaba said the program's biggest area of need is better training and more funding for monitoring and enforcement. The ministry created a Monitoring, Enforcement and Compliance Department (MECD) to ensure service delivery by PSPs and prompt payment by customers. The task has been an uphill struggle. In a recent enforcement action, the MECD closed a prominent restaurant for several hours for not paying its bill. Officials hope this example will demonstrate their resolve and encourage compliance by other corporate customers. Some MECD efforts at enforcement among private citizens, however, have prompted allegations of officers' collusion with the police in unlawful arrests and extortions.

18. Expanding the pilot program to all of Lagos would more than double its scope, requiring a commensurate increase in capacity and funding. Beyond improving this trash collection component of the waste management system, the ministry also wants to upgrade its 3 dump sites into sanitary landfills and rehabilitate its 2 transfer loading stations. Officials estimate the state needs an additional 3 landfills and 2 transfer stations. Anibaba said the ministry also is working on a program to recycle the plastic bags in which drinking water is commonly sold. Soem estimates measure plastic bags as 30 percent of the trash generated in Lagos. According to Anibaba, all efforts are hampered by inadequate funding. Ministry staff continue to seek funding, equipment, and technical assistance from outside sources.

NGO Groups Try to Bridge The Gaps

19. Meanwhile, some local NGO groups are trying to bridge the gaps in service by encouraging citizens to dispose of refuse properly and "keep their own backyards clean." The Center for Values and Leadership (CVL), led by one of Lagos' most civic-minded public intellectuals, Professor Pat Utomi, organizes monthly clean-up campaigns in impoverished areas. Pol-chief participated in one such session over the weekend. Residents joined business leaders and others in a day of cleaning up the neighborhood. After four hours, dozens of trash bags were full, but the area remained so dirty, it was hard to tell a clean-up had occurred. Also, residents asked for payment for their services after the clean-up. CVL volunteers explained that keeping the environment clean was our collective responsibility. Some accepted this rationale, while others vowed not to participate in future such efforts. CVL hired trucks to remove the trash following the clean-up intervention. However, they had not arrived but the time most participants departed. A volunteer stayed in the community to ensure that the residents were not left with bagged trash instead of dispersed refuse.

COMMENT

10. Previous meetings with Anibaba and other ministry staff and consultants have left us sure of their desire to improve waste management in Lagos but doubtful of their capacity to do so in a meaningful way, due to inadequate funding. However, success in implementing the pilot scheme and achieving some noticeable results shows the ministry is moving in the right direction. Efforts to refine the pilot program further show commitment and responsiveness. Ultimately, though, the

ministry will need a lot more funding and Lagosians will need further education on the responsibility they owe to themselves to make their own backyards cleaner.

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